The emergence of mandatory continuing professional education at The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland

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Abstract

This paper explores the emergence of mandatory Continuing Professional Education (CPE) at CPA Ireland. While more recent within the accounting profession, mandatory CPE is an essential component of on-going education for accounting professionals. Mandatory CPE was not required of accountants until 1st January 2006, following 2004 International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) guidance. However, bye-laws of accounting bodies in the United Kingdom and Ireland referred to CPE since the 1970s as a recommendation, not a mandatory requirement. CPA Ireland instigated such a mandatory system effective 1st January 1993, many years before the IFAC ruling and nearly a decade before most other professional accounting bodies in the region. This paper explores the historical emergence of this mandatory system through a neo-institutional approach. The evidence suggests that some institutional contradictions arose, mainly around misaligned interests and legitimacy. From these contradictions, institutional change from within emerged, a component of which was mandatory CPE.

Keywords:

Introduction

The role of education in the development of the accounting profession is unquestionable, but surprisingly little research is published from a historical perspective. Accounting has been in existence for centuries, but it was not until the industrial revolution that regular employment of accountants as professionals became more commonplace (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933). Accountants have been perceived historically to be part of a solid conservative service profession with an impeccable reputation for ethical integrity, honesty, respectability, professionalism, and a strong focus on the public interest or public concern (Carnegie and Napier, 2010). However, the first half of the twentieth century saw the professional accountant moving from an:

> 'independent gentleman who did not promote himself and whose integrity and expertise did not require rigid rules of conduct, to a new generation that embraced a more modern ideal of the professional, one who followed strict rules of conduct and educational requirements, and who embraced a broader vision of public accountancy's responsibilities' (Doron, 2009: iv).

Further changes to the profession emerged from the mid-1960s onwards, with a movement towards a 'business profession' where accounting practices looked to offer more profitable services (Boyd, 2004; Carnegie and Napier, 2010; Wyatt, 2004). These changes brought about new challenges and illustrated the difficulty of being a professional with an explicit covenant to serve the public interest in situations where there are considerable economic incentives to adhere to economic self-interest (Canning and O'Dwyer, 2001; Parker, 1994; Willmott and Sikka, 1997). Indeed, Willmott and Sikka (1997) suggest that the accounting profession places ‘emphasis on [...] promoting business virtues’ and is ‘uninhibited by the need even to pay lip service to a public interest ethos’ (p. 833).

Today, growing numbers of accountants are employed by corporations rather than as independent practitioners (CAI, 2015; Daley, 2002; Middlehurst and Kennie, 1997). This, coupled with increasing specialisation of roles, has led to diverse career pathways. The introduction of mandatory guidance (IFAC, 2004) effectively places responsibility on individual accounting practitioners to maintain and continue to develop professional competence through professional education and development (Coffield, 1999; De Lange et al., 2012). This on-going renewal of professional competence is referred to, in the contemporary literature, as Continuing Professional Education (CPE) and/or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Friedman and Phillips, 2004) - for further elaboration regarding the development of professional education, see Section 2.2. From the perspective of accounting education history, while CPE/CPD may have existed informally since the inception of the profession, formal requirements are more recent phenomena (Paisey and Paisey, 2007, 2014).

There is little extant literature on mandatory CPE/CPD in terms of its historical development. This paper contributes to this element of accounting education history by detailing the emergence of a mandatory CPE/CPD requirement at the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (also referred to as CPA Ireland). This professional body was the first within the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland to adopt such requirements - nearly a decade before most other similar bodies. Thus, it departed from the institutional arrangements of the time and we explore institutional factors which resulted in this decision. Through an analysis of CPA Ireland documentation, we seek out the institutional arrangements at macro and micro levels in an effort to understand the pioneering changes within CPA Ireland. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the development of the accounting profession in the UK and Ireland, professional accounting education history and the history of CPA Ireland. It also outlines our theoretical framing, namely institutional theory, and the methods used. Section 3 details the emergence of a mandatory CPE scheme at CPA Ireland and finally, Section 4 discusses the emergence through an institutional lens.

Brief history and literature review

This section provides some detail of relevant extant literature from three avenues. First, some key extant literature charting the development of the accounting profession in the UK and Ireland is outlined. This is followed by an exploration of literature on professional accounting education from a historical perspective. Finally, a brief history of CPA Ireland is given. Together, these three avenues provide context for the paper.

Development of the accounting profession in Ireland and the UK

Until the mid-nineteenth century, accountants in Ireland and the UK largely operated as bookkeepers and, in many cases, were not referred to as 'accountants'[1]. The accounting profession, as we know it, emerged in the UK during the Victorian era (Farmar, 2013; Robinson, 1964, 1983; Rowe, 1988).[2] Growth in large scale manufacturing and business operations, combined with the introduction of limited liability in the 1844 UK Joint Stock Companies Act, led to a demand for greater accounting proficiency and more complex accounting techniques (Clarke, 2006; Zeff, 1971). In a bid to improve status and legitimacy, accountants in UK cities formed associations. In 1854, the Institute of Accountants in Edinburgh was renamed the Society of Accountants in Edinburgh and became the first professional accounting body established by Royal Charter (ICAS, 2012)[3]. In May 1880, five English associations united to form the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).[4] Shortly after, the Society of Incorporated Accountants and Auditors (SIAA) formed in 1885 to provide professional status to those accounting practitioners who failed to meet the stringent requirements of ICAEW[5]. Similarly, the London Association of Accountants was established in 1904 to allow more open access to the profession than what was available through the ICAEW. Following substantial organic growth and through a series of mergers, this association was renamed in 1971 the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and was granted royal charter in 1974. Today, it is perceived as a global professional accounting body. A further association, the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants (ICWA), was founded in 1919 specializing in the development of accounting techniques for use in the internal control of manufacturing, service and public sector operations. In 1986, the body changed its name to the

Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) upon granting of a Royal Charter. It is now a globally recognized accounting qualification, based in the UK and recognized predominantly in Commonwealth countries and Ireland.[6] The major professional bodies in the UK - ICAEW, ACCA and CIMA - have continued to prosper[7]. In 1974, the professional accounting bodies with royal charters, operating in the UK, came together to establish the UK Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies (CCAB - UK). This forum enables discussion of issues of common concern and provides a representative and common voice for the accountancy profession in the UK.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI), which dates to a Royal Charter in 1888, was the first Irish professional accounting body. Annisette and O'Regan (2007) describe the 'strategies adopted by the institute to negotiate the destructive and divisive forces of the wider socio-political environment' (2007:4). O'Regan (2008) recounts its efforts to control membership by admittance through strict examinations and apprenticeship articles to ensure the 'perpetuation of the socio-political ethos of the founders' (2008:55). An Irish branch of the SIAA was established in 1901 in response to an exclusionary strategy adopted by ICAI (O'Regan, 2013). This 'offered the prospect of membership of an international organization coupled with the benefits of a local intermediary' (O'Regan, 2013:268). However, ICAI was the larger Irish body, with 97 members by 1917 (ICAI, 1917). This had grown to over 3,000 members in 1975 (Farmar, 2013). Two further Irish bodies were established after the formation of the Irish Free

State in 1922: The Irish Association of Accountants (IAA) in 1926 and the Society of Public Accountants Ltd (SPA) in 1943. These bodies ultimately amalgamated to form CPA Ireland - for greater detail on the development of CPA Ireland, see Section 2.3. The development of CPE within that institute is the focus of this paper. Membership of the accounting profession in Ireland has substantially increased within all professional accounting bodies - See Table 1 for a summary of the current membership of the accounting profession in Ireland. In 1988, an Irish equivalent of the CCAB was established to coordinate the representation of participant professional bodies in areas of common interest to the profession. The initial membership of CCAB - I consisted of ICAI, ACCA and CIMA. CPA Ireland formally accepted an invitation to become a member in May 1991.

[insert Table 1 about here]

A number of studies describe the accounting profession in Ireland as part of the British Empire (pre-1922) and/or Ireland in an international context – see, for example, Carnegie and Napier (2002), Parker (2005, 2014), Walker (1995) and Zeff (1971). Clarke (2006) highlights that: ‘because of its geographical location and shared language, accounting practice in Ireland was heavily influenced by its dominant neighbour, the UK’ (2006:18). In the 1800s and for much of the 1900s, accounting practice and the regulation thereof in Ireland mirrored that introduced by the UK Companies Acts. Ireland gained its independence in 1922 and in its early years, the Irish government was faced with significant political and social concerns (Clarke, 2001). At this time, the ‘accounting profession was small and lacked influence and the Irish Stock Exchange was underdeveloped’ (Clarke, 2006:18) and there was little focus on accounting matters (Hiebl et al., 2015; Jeacle and Walsh, 2008; Quinn, 2014; Quinn and Jackson, 2014). However, Clarke (2004, 2006) notes advances in the development of management accounting in the aftermath of the Second World War as Ireland’s economy started to grow. For many years, companies themselves took the lead in accounting matters and provided what they considered the most useful metrics to investors and other decision-makers. By the 1960s, changes in business ownership and size, improving economic conditions, incentives to attract foreign direct investment and the advent of Ireland’s membership into the then European Economic Community (EEC), renewed focus on the accounting profession in Ireland and its practices (Clarke, 2001, 2006; Farmar, 2013). The enactment of the first major Irish piece of corporate legislation in the Companies Act of 1963 marked the beginning of a new era for accounting in Ireland. Shortly after, the establishment of the UK Accounting Standards Steering Committee (ASSC) in the early 1970s led to the introduction of the first formal accounting standards - Statements of Standard Accounting Practice (SSAPs) - in the UK and Ireland[8].

Membership to all professional accounting bodies continued to grow throughout the 1970s and there was an acknowledgement of the need for global representation of the profession. In October 1977, 63 professional accounting bodies, representing 51 countries, came together to establish the worldwide accounting body International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) at the

11th World Congress of Accountants in Munich. The President of CPA Ireland, Mr. R.J. Neary, was one of the founding members to sign its constitution[9]. IFAC was established to strengthen the worldwide accountancy profession with reference to the public interest by developing, promoting and implementing high-quality international standards for professional accountants in education, ethics, auditing and assurance and public sector accounting; facilitating collaboration and cooperation among member bodies and with other international organizations; and serving as the international spokesperson for the accountancy profession (IFAC, 2015). IFAC's membership has grown to include over 175 members and associates in more than 130 countries and jurisdictions worldwide, representing more than 2.8 million accountants (IFAC, 2015).

History of professional accounting education

There is a dearth of accounting history literature with reference to professional accounting education in the Irish context. Thus, in our brief review here, we draw mainly on references whose subject matter is the emergence of the accounting profession and the development of professional education.

The focus of early professional education in accounting had been to ensure that only those with an acceptable level of knowledge and competence were admitted to the profession (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Hoskin and Macve, 1986). Traditionally, knowledge was passed from one generation of accountants to the next in accordance with a master-apprentice type relationship, in which the apprentice (trainee) would not perform below the standards set by superiors. However, advances of the competence movement led to a more formalised professional education system. The origin of this movement can be traced back to the early twentieth century when a concern for a 'more rational, cost-effective and practically useful curriculum' began to emerge in response to increasing numbers and backgrounds of prospective students and to increased societal demands for higher levels of professionalism (Ashworth and Saxton, 1990: 3). From the mid-1960s, a demand for greater accountability in education, increased emphasis on the economy and more community involvement in decision-making led to a mainstream development of competence-based education (Burke, 1989). Advances in professional accounting education have been strongly influenced by this evolution and by economic developments over the years and have evolved accordingly to cater for an 'increasingly dynamic, competitive, and complex business environment' (Byrne and Flood, 2003: 211).

Professional education and development may be considered as two separate components, namely pre-qualification and post-qualification education and development (IFAC, 2004; Paisey and Paisey, 2014). The emphasis until relatively recently has been on pre-qualification or initial training periods, with professional examinations used to assess whether trainees have acquired an acceptable level of knowledge to enter the profession (Jarvis, 1983). An "incredible' amount of resources, both financial and human, are used to support the three to six years of professionals' initial education' (Cervero, 2001: 17). It typically consists of a very structured curriculum and formal assessment accredited by a professional body, sufficiently broad to enable young professionals to subsequently work in a wide variety of roles and organizations (Daley, 1999; Eraut, 1994; Houle, 1980). Policies for initial education are well established and have developed through a series of mutual accommodations between higher education and professional organizations. However, they are notoriously overcrowded because they attempt to include all the knowledge required for a lifetime in the professions (Cervero, 2001) and it has become increasingly apparent that this front-loading effort may not be as efficient as the process suggests (Flood and Wilson, 2009; Paisey and Paisey, 2014). There is now awareness that pre-service students do not have ‘time in school’ to ‘cover [all] the ground’ and cannot predict changing environments and contexts (Houle, 1980:85). The accounting profession has thus renewed focus on post-qualification education and development of its members who are charged with providing high-quality services throughout their professional lives and the idea that planned learning is only for trainees is no longer the norm (IFAC, 2004; Paisey and Paisey, 2014).

Both CPE and CPD are referred to, in contemporary literature, in the context of post-qualification education and development. CPE largely refers to formal education which comprises a prescribed learning framework, an organized learning event or package, the presence of a designated teacher or trainer, the award of a qualification or credit and an external specification of outcomes (Eraut, 2000). However, it fails to appropriately acknowledge that many of the problems faced by professional practitioners are undocumented in the teaching material. Schon’s (1987) swamp metaphor highlights that those *teaching* practices are dealing with certainties and stable contexts while those actually *doing* are dealing with ever-changing environments and conditions. CPD is distinguished from CPE as it recognises ‘informal learning that can be achieved through practice’ (Friedman and Phillips, 2004: 371) whereby ‘the purely educational element becomes one alongside others’ (Gardner, 1978:5). It also acknowledges that learning increasingly becomes more relevant to the practice setting. The proliferation of the use of CPD as the mainstream terminology, recognises that informal learning is gradually being accepted as ‘fundamental, necessary and valuable in its own right’ and not merely as an inferior alternative or a precursor to formal learning (Coffield, 2000: 8). CPE and CPD, therefore, are not a means of modifying shortcomings of initial education but a means of continuing to develop professionals (Paisey and Paisey, 2000, 2014).

CPE was firstly introduced in the 1960s with the publication of a conceptual scheme for the lifelong education of physicians (Cervero, 2001). Other professions also began to acknowledge that further education and development could be beneficial for their members. Many professional accountancy bodies introduced CPD policies in the late 1970s; however, these initiatives were voluntary rather than mandatory (Paisey and Paisey, 2007). Until the 1980s, ‘little systematic thought’ was given to education and development during the forty years of professional practice from the 1970s (Cervero, 2001: 17) and little resources had been allocated (Houle 1980). Initially, perceived professional obsolescence in knowledge, skills, and practices was the main rationale for increased emphasis on mandatory CPE and CPD in accounting (Eurich, 1990; Rahman and Velayutham, 1998). However, the Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC) (1986) asserted that CPD also supports an enhancement of knowledge and skills attained at the point of entry into the profession and provides ‘challenging opportunities for learning and using skills and knowledge’ (AECC, 1986: 6). Further, it aids practitioners to identify when levels of knowledge and skills have become deficient so that they can proactively initiate training/development to regain competence (Jarvis, 2004; Rahman and Velayutham, 1998).

In terms of status, CPD is currently in a similar state as the pre-service stage of professional education in the early twentieth century; it is therefore in a state of infancy and transition and has yet to grow to achieve coherence, size, and stature equivalent to the pre-service stage of professional qualification (Cervero 2000, 2001; Friedman and Phillips, 2004). However, it is now mandatory for continuing registration, for continuing certification of competence and for regulating professionals’ practice within most professions (Cervero, 2000, 2001; De Lange et al., 2012). IFAC promulgations have ensured that CPD is considered mainstream within the accounting profession and is regarded as a *bona fide* stage in the lifecycle of professional accounting education (Friedman and Phillips, 2004). IFAC (2002) asserts that the period during which accounting practitioners develop their proficiency in professional roles continues well beyond initial qualification. IFAC (2004) introduced IES 7 (revised 2012), *Continuing Professional Development: A Program of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development of Professional Competence*, effective 1st January 2006. IES 7 was promulgated through membership obligations of IFAC and requires member professional bodies to ‘foster a commitment to lifelong learning through mandatory CPD schemes’ (2004: 1). However, overriding responsibility is placed upon individual professionals and CPD requirements are meant to facilitate the development of professional competence of individuals to enable a more efficient and effective performance in their current and future roles and boost their career progression (Friedman and Phillips, 2004). In terms of historical research, given CPE has quite recent history, it has to date not received any great attention.

Brief history of CPA Ireland

Having outlined literature on the development of the accounting profession in the UK and Ireland and professional accounting education, a brief history of CPA Ireland follows[10]. In 1926, four years after the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, many challenges awaited the fledgling nation. Institutions and organs of the State had to be formed, legislation enacted and trade promoted, to name but a few. In this context, The IAA was formed on 11th March 1926 as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies (Consolidation) Act 1908 - an existing piece of legislation from pre-independence. The initial articles of association of the IAA extended to 117 in number, covering matters such as membership admission, finances, fees, the conduct of meetings, council duties, and examinations. At an inaugural dinner on 17th January 1927, the Chairman, William Bowesman, noted the Association was 'the first body of accountants incorporated under the laws of SaorstatEireann[11]' (*Irish Times*, 1927). The body had an imperative of seeing a 'high standard of professional conduct in the coming years' (ibid), he added. The Chairman also noted that no candidate sitting the first exams in November 1926 was of a standard to justify admission to membership (ibid) - see Table 2 for a summary of the examinations at that time.

[insert Table 2 about here]

In 1927, all Irish accountants were faced with the prospect of regulation in the form of the Registered Accountants Bill, 1927 (see Robinson, 1964:183-191). A key objective of this Bill was to ensure that all accountants in the State were registered and appropriately skilled. The Bill has defeated 18 votes to 15 on 24th February 1927[12]. The IAA continued for nearly forty years and was wound up by voluntary liquidation on 29th June 1965. Some months before, on 24th October 1964, the IAA Council took a unanimous decision to 'proceed in negotiations […] with a view to amalgamation' with another body in February of that year. This other body, the SPA, blended with the IAA to become the current CPA Ireland.

The SPA was incorporated on 29th January 1943. According to a *CPA Newsletter* from January 1993 marking the fiftieth anniversary, the Society was formed to represent accountants whether in public practice, industry or the public sector. The Memorandum of Association from 1943 set out many of the features of today's body, for example: members were classified as Associates or Fellows; Associate Membership was through examination and five years' experience in public practice, as an accountant employed by the State, or as an accountant in a company of good standing; a Disciplinary Committee was to be formed, and the Council had the power to make bye-laws. Interestingly, the Memorandum document of the SPA did not detail examinable subjects and such decisions were instead vested in the Council. In 1961, the name was changed to The Irish Society of Certified Public Accountants Ltd and this new name was granted recognition under the Irish Companies Act 1963 as an approved (but not prescribed, see later) auditing body.

After amalgamation with the IAA, a further name change occurred in 1971 to the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland. The name change was approved by the Minister for Industry and Commerce and ratified by an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Institute on 18th September 1971, which at this time had some 200 admitted members. In the 1960s and 1970s, the profile of those joining CPA Ireland was largely uniform, with the majority of joining members completing the main State-run secondary school examination, to reach the Leaving Certificate. Significant focus on growth throughout the 1970s resulted in a trebling of candidates taking examinations between 1973 (198 candidates) and 1979 (596 candidates). This growth continued during the 1980s. By the early 1990s, the trend in recruitment had changed, with approximately one third of candidates coming directly from the Leaving Certificate and the remaining two thirds with further qualifications. By CPA Ireland's milestone fiftieth anniversary in 1993, student membership was 1,600 and full membership in excess of 1,000 located in over 20 countries worldwide. The economic upturn in Ireland in the late 1990s led to further growth and the admission of the 2,000th member in 2000 and the 3,000th member in 2006. Almost all entrants in more recent years possess qualifications from third level institutions and the age profile of entrants is increasing. Today, CPA Ireland has approximately 5,000 members and students in industry and practice in Ireland and around the world - see Table 3 for summary CPA Ireland membership data.

[insert Table 3 about here]

As noted above, the SPA utilised bye-laws as an administrative regulation and this continues today within CPA Ireland. Presently, bye-law 8 of CPA Ireland relates to *Continuing Professional Education.* The emergence of this bye-law is the focus of this study[13]. This bye-law mandated compulsory and formal CPE for members of CPA Ireland many years before other similar professional bodies and before the promulgation of IES 7. Section Three details the history of events leading up to CPE introduction for members of CPA Ireland, but first the theoretical lens utilised to frame the events are outlined.

Theoretical lens and method

As noted in the previous section, this exploration of the introduction of CPE at CPA Ireland is a story of change, albeit at the level of a professional accounting body. Many theoretical lenses have been used to study change concerning accounting practices in organizations, accounting bodies and accounting regulations from a contemporary or historical perspective. For example, contemporary studies of accounting change have drawn on actor-network theory (e.g. Alcouffe et

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al., 2008; Dechow and Mouritsen, 2005), institutional sociology (e.g. Nor-Aziah and Scapens, 2007), and institutional economics (e.g. Burns and Scapens, 2000; Lukka, 2007; Quinn, 2014). In accounting history literature, some of these approaches have also been used to study change. For example, institutional sociology has been utilised by Carmona et al.(1998) and Núñez (2002); concepts from institutional economics have been used by Hiebl et al.(2015) and Quinn and Jackson (2014). Additionally, other accounting history scholars, such as Edwards (1992), Edwards and Boyns (1992) and Carnegie and Napier (2002), have noted more general aspects of accounting change, such as the process of change, change agents and comparative dimensions of change.

For the present study, we draw on elements of institutional theory to frame our analysis. We acknowledge that the term 'institutional theory' is very broad and comprises many facets. We adopt a neo-institutional approach as noted by Rowlinson and Hassard (2013), drawing on neo-institutional concepts to illuminate the telling of historical events. We do not intend to contribute to extant neo-institutional theory drawing on history, a notion that Rowlinson and Hassard (2013) refer to as historical neo-institutionalism. With this in mind, we draw on the work of Williamson (2000) and Seo and Creed (2002) to frame this study. The work of Williamson (2000) sets out four levels of social (institutional) analysis. Briefly, these are - in order of influence-, 1) informal institutions, customs, norms, traditions, religions; 2) the institutional environment (the formal rules of the game); 3) governance (playing the game); and 4) resource allocation and employment. Williamson (2000) argues that level 1 institutions influence level 2 ones; level 2 influences level 3 and so on. He also argues that level 4 institutions are subject to continuous change (for example through prices), whereas level 1 institutions are typically subject to change over decades or centuries, and such change may originate from lower levels as feedback over time. On the latter point, Williamson notes he mainly neglects such feedback in his analysis, but he does acknowledge that over time 'the system is fully interconnected' (2003: 586).

In terms of the accounting profession, as embodied within the professional body of the current CPA Ireland, Williamson's (2000) levels of institutional analysis are used to frame and interpret various forces (internal and external) which may have brought about change and/or maintained stability within the body. For this study, we present Williamson's (2000) four levels of institutional analysis as shown in Table 4 and include some exemplars relevant to this study in the right-hand column. We include public interest as a level 1 institution which is broadly consistent with theories of economic regulation (see, for example, Hantke-Domas, 2003; Pigou, 1920; Stigler, 1971). As noted by Hantke-Domas (2003:165), a public interest approach to economics 'explains in general terms that regulation seeks the protection and benefit of the public at large'. Thus, following Williamson's (2000) logic, the notion of public interest precedes regulation (e.g. accounting standards) which we interpret as a level 2 institution. To give an example relevant to this paper, it was 2004 before IFAC issued formal regulations regarding CPD. However, the original Memorandum of Association of the IAA from 1926 notes an aim of the body as:

'[…] to provide an Irish organization for accountants and auditors, both men and women,

> and generally do all such things […] as may be necessary to elevate the status and procure the advancements of the interest of the profession' (Clause, 3 (a)).

This suggests that the 'interest of the profession' was an important concept and similar mentions are to be seen in other professional accounting bodies' charters or founding documents. Moreover, while the espoused interest of the profession is largely public interest (Canning and O'Dwyer, 2001; Parker, 1994), private interest can come to the fore over public interest. We return briefly to public interest later - see below, and also in Section 3.

[insert Table 4 about here]

While summarising much previous institutional work and noting time frames for change at each level of analysis, Williamson (2000) does not detail causes of change to incumbent institutions. Thus, his four levels of institutions are more an analytical framework which needs to be supplemented with additional theoretical insights. For example, he notes level 1 institutions may be guided by social theory, level 2 by property rights/positive political theory, level 3 by transaction cost economics and level 4 by neoclassical economics/agency theory (Williamson, 2000: 597). Thus, in this vein, we draw on the work of Seo and Creed (2002) who provide some useful insights on what they term 'institutional contradictions' (p. 226). These contradictions can arise over the long term and 'provide the seeds for institutional change' (ibid) - part of the feedback loop which Williamson (2000) refers to but does not elaborate in great detail. Seo and

Creed's work mainly emphasises institutions at the organizational level, that is, levels 3 and 4 (Williamson, 2000), but they clearly link to the higher level institutions noting that 'institutions can develop contradictions with their environments, other institutions, or elementary social behavior' (Seo and Creed, 2002: 226). They note four sources of institutional contradiction - legitimacy that undermines functional inefficiency, adaptation that undermines adaptability, conformity that creates inter-institutional incompatibilities and isomorphism which misaligns interests. When any such contradictions arise, a shift in the collective consciousness of agents may occur and institutional change results. Thus, taking the work of Williamson (2000) and Seo and Creed (2002) together for the purposes of this study, we have a lens through which exploring and analysing institutions at various levels, and interpreting any potential institutional contradictions which resulted in a change at CPA Ireland - which in this case is the introduction of CPE.

We now describe our data collection method. We note the authors are not CPA Ireland members and that to the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first one which explores the history of CPA Ireland. The data for this study come primarily from internal CPA Ireland records, which were granted permission for access. The records include meeting minutes of CPA Ireland's Council and annual general meetings, company formation documents and other internal documents and magazines/journals published by CPA Ireland. These documents were photographed and stored digitally. For context, we also referred to newspaper articles and sources of regulation as required, which were sourced from newspaper archives and online databases of Irish law. From these sources, and drawing on our institutional lens as set out above, we analysed the documents for signs of institutional contradictions (Seo and Creed, 2002) to tease out the catalyst(s) for mandatory CPE requirements at CPA Ireland. The analysis was conducted manually, keeping in mind Seo and Creed's (2002) contradictions but also the various levels of institutional analysis, which may yield clues as to the direction of change (e.g. top-down from the societal level or bottom-up from within the organization). In addition to the document analysis, we also interviewed the current Chief Executive, who has been a member of staff at CPA Ireland since 1989. This interview was conducted for a number of reasons. First, it allowed us to gain some insights into the workings of CPA Ireland at the time as this person was involved in initial discussions on CPE. Second, it provided context on the general nature of the accounting profession in Ireland during the 1970s to the 1990s. For example, the increasing importance of public interest was noted. Third, it provided us with some guidance on interpreting important documents and date ranges to focus our analysis of CPA documentation. The interview was not recorded, with the authors taking detailed notes of key points instead.

The emergence of CPE at CPA Ireland

We now detail the emergence of mandatory CPE in CPA Ireland, starting from the mid-1970s. As noted in Section 2.2, contemporary literature distinguishes CPE and CPD. CPA Ireland's requirements incorporate both as described in the literature, but refer and always have referred to it as CPE. Although a general outline of the history of CPA Ireland is given in Section 2.3, we now add to this from an accounting education perspective to set the scene in the run-up to the emergence of mandatory CPE requirements. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, six regional societies were established within CPA Ireland - Munster, Leinster, Ulster, Western, Mid-West, and British. Each of the six regional societies incorporated parallel student and member societies whose objectives were to increase the profile of the body, to provide a forum to network, share issues, socialise, and be educated. A focus on further expansion led to the appointment of a public relations officer, the establishment of a Student Services Committee and a Recruitment Committee in 1971. A newspaper campaign targeting student recruitment was launched in 1972 and other recruitment initiatives were also undertaken, including visits to careers' guidance exhibitions, universities, regional colleges, and schools to promote a career in accounting with CPA Ireland. As highlighted in Section 2.3, this strategy proved successful and substantial increases in student membership followed. The Council of CPA Ireland established committees by the mid-1970s to reflect matters concerning students and members, including taxation, accounting standards and ethics, disciplinary, examinations, student liaison, and seminars committees. The variety of committees within the Council subsequently expanded to reflect evolving concerns.

An extensive review of the pre-qualification syllabus was carried out in the mid-1970s to take account of educational, legislative, ethical and professional standards and responsibilities, and other developments of the time. This review was prompted by several external factors such as the introduction of SSAPs and the introduction of value added tax in 1972 and corporation tax in 1976 (see Farmar, 2013). A revised syllabus and examination process was formally approved by the Council in 1976 and the first examinations of the new syllabus took place in May 1977. The syllabus comprised four key stages which continue today: Formation I, Formation II, Professional I and Professional II, with four assessable subjects at each level.

There was a growing realisation within the professional body that qualified members could also benefit from training and education. Council minutes from the late 1970s reveal that CPA Ireland was mindful that other professional accounting bodies were promoting CPE - for example, the ICAS and ICAEW had, in 1977, recommended members to follow CPE guidelines effective on 1st January 1978 and 30th June 1978 respectively. These recommendations involved prescribed hours of both structured[14] learning (such as courses and preparation of technical material)[15], and unstructured learning (such as reading newspapers and professional journals) over a three-year period. Members of ICAS and ICAEW were also required to provide details of continuing education undertaken each year. In October 1978, it was agreed by CPA Ireland Council to provide for CPE on a voluntary basis until 1981, at which point Council would have the power to introduce mandatory CPE. The other principal Irish Institute, ICAI, followed and in December 1980 recommended that all members should undertake CPE (Robinson, 1983)[16]. Thus, by 1980, many professional accounting bodies in the UK and Ireland had *recommended* CPE/CPD of some form, but it was not formally monitored by the respective bodies or tied to continuing membership as would be the norm today.

CPA Ireland elected not to introduce mandatory CPE in 1981, instead of continuing with a recommendation to members to undertake CPE. Notwithstanding, focus on education continued

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and the CPA Ireland Chief Executive was elected to chair a study group to examine the 'Education for the Accountant' at the IFAC Annual Congress in Mexico in 1982. Meanwhile, increasing accounting guidance promulgations in the 1980s and the Irish Companies (Amendment) Act 1986, which led to a more public relationship between the auditor and the client, increased focus on 'public interest' within the accounting profession (see *Irish Times*, 1986). Council minutes reveal that a debate was emerging with regard to whether 'the public interest' should be applied only to practice members or to all members, in that presenting a balance sheet to a board of directors was no less in the public interest than providing an audit report accompanying a set of financial statements. Towards the end of the 1980s, this debate spurred a general re-appraisal of CPA Ireland, which included CPE. In 1988, a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was formed to support the direction of Council. The SPC consisted of the CPA Ireland President, two Vice-Presidents and the Chief Executive; it did not include representation from other structures within the organization. The SPC met five times and submitted a report to the Council on 14th February 1989 for consideration at the next meeting of 22nd February 1989. The SPC report, simply titled 'Report of the Strategic Planning Committee', in its opening paragraph noted (emphasis in original):

'in order for the Institute to grow and go forward over the next five years, *it must accurately assess its present position, decide where it wants to go to and ensure that it has the resources to get to its destination*'.

At the time of the SPC report, the number of members was 700, with 1,400 enrolled students - as cited in the report itself. The SPC report presented several areas for recommendation to Council to encourage the growth and development of the Institute; CPE was one of these areas. First, the overall aim of CPA Ireland was addressed. The SPC recommended the aim to be changed to read as below (italicised text being the main change noted in the SPC report):

> ‘The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland aims *to service and represent the general interest of its members,* by promoting the development of the accountancy profession in the public interest, and maintaining a high standard of professional practice, knowledge, skill and ethical conduct among the members of the Institute and ensuring that this is perceived by all’.

The inclusion of the above change to the aim was justified by the SPC in the context of maintaining CPA Ireland as a stand-alone professional body (the issue of Irish professional accounting bodies merging had been a suggestion in the 1980s and would be revisited in the 1990s). The SPC report noted that if the general interest of members was not served (by maintaining the Institute) then ‘the Institute would in a matter of time cease to exist’. Second, the SPC report noted CPA Ireland wished to gain recognised body status, not only in Ireland, but at the European Union (EU) and international level[17]. Recognition in a more general sense also emerges from the SPC report. It notes:

> ‘Our Institute has battled long and hard to get its recognition at home and abroad and the Committee is keenly aware of all the effort and time that has been committed to this aim. We are also aware of the main obstructions to our recognition [and how it] strangled the growth of the Institute over the years.

> The Committee further believes that in pursuing recognition […] that it would be unwise for the Institute to continue to rely as heavily as it does on external agencies including our own State Departments and for that reason strongly recommends that the Chief Executive be given responsibility to pursue this recognition'.

The report also noted that recognition abroad had been increased thanks to the removal of barriers at the EEC level and the approval of a mutual recognition directive[18]. Thus, a key objective was to improve recognition in general at home - which would have been aided by recognition in general at the EEC/EU level and as a recognised body in Ireland. Third, the report suggested a restructuring and development of the Council, mainly the formation of sub-committees to support recognition, internal administration, members, and students. These three items effectively summarise the strategic intentions of CPA Ireland at the time. In addition, the SPC report referred to the need of publishing an improved journal: it recommended that content should be improved to include sections on student/member issues, in-depth research, editorials on contemporary issues, guest contributions and examinations. Such improvements would support CPE efforts of members, although this was not expressly noted within the SPC report.

Within the strategic intentions of the SPC report, CPE received direct mention as an issue for consideration to underpin the development of members - as reflected in the amended aim of CPA Ireland noted above - and improve the recognition of CPA Ireland as well. Compulsory CPE proposals outlined in the SPC report mandated that an input-based approach should be adopted, whereby a specified amount of learning activity is established. It was proposed that members should complete at least 14 hours CPE per year. The relative size and agility of CPA Ireland

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enabled a ‘bottom-up’ approach through its regional societies. The SPC recommended that key regional venues (e.g. Dublin, Cork, and Limerick) facilitated two three-day formal CPE sessions each year. These sessions would incorporate key speakers and printed notes. The same speakers would be facilitated at each venue to ensure continuity and equality of presentation. Members would be obliged to attend two sessions (each of one-day duration) to achieve the proposed mandated 14 hours CPE. The SPC was mindful that over 60% of the Institute’s members were operating outside of practice and core areas deemed most significant and transcending members’practice in industry were auditing, taxation,, and accounting. Sanctions were outlined in the event of failure to comply with this compulsory CPE programme, to the extent that offending member names and addresses would be published in the CPA Ireland journal. Full credits (i.e. 14 hours) were required for two years over three and membership would not be renewed unless a special fee for an Emergency CPE seminar was paid. This proposed fee was to be set at three times the planned normal CPE fee per day and uplifted to include a penalty amount.

Council raised the issue of implementation of the compulsory CPE, as outlined in the SPC report, at the Annual General Meeting on 21st April 1989. The minutes of this meeting were formally approved on 20th April 1990, and the compulsory CPE, as outlined in the SPC report, was adopted, with implementation effective 1st January 1993. CPA Ireland was, therefore, the first professional accounting body in the UK and Ireland[19] to formally commit to mandatory CPE, fourteen years before the IFAC ruling on CPE/CPD. The Council formed a new CPE committee to oversee the implementation of a continuing education programme at a practical level in terms of formal course offerings commenced in 1991. As recorded in the minutes of a Council meeting held on 28th March 1991, two half day sessions were to be held - one session on 'The 1990 Company [sic] Act and the Auditor' and the second on 'The Audit of Small Company Accounts'. These two seminars were topical at the time given the passing of substantial pieces of company law in Ireland in the form of the Companies (Amendment) Act 1986 and the Companies Act 1990. The minutes noted that the first seminar 'is an important seminar for ALL members' (emphasis in original) and 'an outline of the future CPE programme shall be communicated'. There was 'agreement on a charge of IR£40, to include adequate documentation'. In addition to the implementation, the CPE Committee was charged with the responsibility of ensuring adequate systems to monitor and control the implementation of the CPE requirements. At the outset, the system was paper-based and it became computerised later in the 1990s. Changes to the bye-laws of CPA Ireland were also required. A new bye-law covering CPE was issued, with effect on all CPA Ireland members during 1991, and an effective date of enforcement on 1st January 1993. To the present day, bye-law 8 regulates for CPE. The first imprint of bye-law 8 from 1992 captures the main strategic propositions as set out in the SPC report, with some modifications. Table 5 summarises its main elements.

[insert Table 5 about here]

The 1992 bye-law remained in force until 2006, when changes were made to take into account IES 7, as issued by IFAC in 2004. The 1992 bye-law consists of nine articles (see Table 5) whereas the 2006 version - which is currently enforced - comprises 24 articles. The new articles in the 2006 bye-law introduced issues such as learning through the technology (e.g. use of CDs or online courses), exemptions from CPE (e.g. due to illness or maternity leave), higher recognition for members in the industry (e.g. involvement in organizational change programmes) and structured and unstructured CPE learning. The bye-law was also modified to take into account that the CPE Committee must comprise at least five members to be appointed each year. Additionally, two committees were introduced in 2006: 1) a CPE Compliance Committee and 2) a CPE Compliance Appeals Committee. These three committees served to bolster existing structures. The key principles as outlined in the 1992 bye-law (see Table 5) were retained in full: maintaining professional competence, requirements (although learning hours increased), recording procedures and accreditation. Interestingly, the definition of CPE in the 2006 bye-law also remains largely unchanged compared to the 1992 one, and it comprises 'the maintenance of professional competence by continuous updating of knowledge and skills' (bye-law, 8, Article 1).

Discussion

Having outlined the emergence of mandatory CPE at CPA Ireland, we now discuss the emergent process using the theoretical lens set out earlier. There were no legal or other provisions requiring CPA Ireland (or any other professional body) to implement mandatory CPE in the 1990s. This suggests, from an institutional perspective, that the pressures for change are likely to have come from lower level institutions e.g. within CPA Ireland itself. Based on the data above, we firstly discuss higher level institutions and then the organization itself as an institution.

Referring back to Table 4, level 1 and level 2 institutions refer respectively to accepted ways of doing business (dictated by, for example, by norms, traditions, religion, the public interest) and legislation and regulation governing business and accounting. These are macro-level institutions and, as noted by Williamson (2000), they impose constraints on lower level institutions. In line with broader institutional works (see for example Burns and Scapens, 2000; Scott, 2014), constraints here refer to existing institutional arrangements, which may prevent change at both a macro and micro-level. Following the chronological details given in the previous section, the institutional dynamics are consistent with Williamson's framework (2000). During the early and mid-1970s, level 1 and 2 institutions influenced CPA Ireland in similar ways as other professional accounting bodies. The introduction of accounting standards - a level 2 institution, as standards are rules to regulate how accountants undertake their work - was brought about by various public accounting scandals of the 1960s. For example, scandals at GEC in 1967 (see Rutherford, 1996) and Pergamon Press in 1968 (see Jones, 2011) brought about change to level 1 institutions as accepted norms and practices were challenged and eventually regulated in the form of accounting standards. In turn, level 3 and 4 institutions responded, which included consideration of education and training of members to comply with new norms, and CPE/CPD. With reference to CPA Ireland, an institutional response/awareness is revealed by the Council minutes from the late 1970s, noting the actions of other professional bodies. As described in the previous section, CPA Ireland followed suit by recommending voluntary CPE from 1978 to

1981. At this point in time, the evidence suggests that CPA Ireland conformed to the prevalent institutional order in its approach to CPE, that is, it was similar to other professional accounting bodies in the region. This continued after 1981 when the decision was taken to retain CPE as 'recommended' to members, rather than be implemented through mandatory requirements. Thus, CPA Ireland conformed to the institutional arrangements of the time, its practices on CPE were similar to other professional accounting bodies and there were no apparent pressures for change emanating from within as revealed through the body's minutes.

The Companies Act (1986) increased focus on public interest in accounting in Ireland, and this emerging debate - as noted earlier, we propose public interest as level 1 institution (see Table 4) - resulted in CPA Ireland considering its strategic position in the late 1980s. The opening paragraph of the SPC report (see earlier) conveyed a wish for 'the Institute to grow and go forward over the next five years' and included consideration of mandatory CPE. As also mentioned in the previous section, it was intended that this growth could improve general recognition of CPA Ireland as a professional body. In terms of Williamson's (2000) framework, and with reference to the SPC report, CPA Ireland's conformity with the existing institutional environment started to drift; until this time, its approach to CPE was the same as other bodies as noted earlier i.e. to recommend CPE. Thus, through the actions/wishes expressed by the SPC report, institutional contradictions emerged, which can be interpreted through Seo and Creed's (2002) work. Through praxis, such contradictions can result in new ways of interacting, which in turn become institutionalised. The contradictions centre around CPA Ireland's wish to grow, develop and improve recognition in contrast to its relative small market size (see Table 1 above).

Its relatively small size, in comparison with other professional bodies in a UK and Irish context, would suggest it was more likely to comply with institutional arrangements and conform to norms and expectations in a similar manner to other professional accounting bodies, as it had been doing. However, this compliance with the contemporary arrangements and expectations contradicted its strategic wish to grow and develop - potentially by differentiating itself in some way - and thus institutional conflict emerged. In Seo and Creed (2002) language, this represents a misaligned interest i.e. CPA Ireland's interest to grow, develop and improve recognition was not a particular interest within the institutional environment occupied by the other professional accounting bodies at the time. Seo and Creed (2002) present a proposition that 'the presence and degree of misaligned interests increase the likelihood and the scope of praxis for institutional change by generating potential change agents' (2002:233). Based on the evidence gathered and described within this paper, this proposition holds for CPA Ireland. Misaligned interests are represented in the SPC report as the desire to grow and increase recognition as opposed to survive as an independent body[20]. These misaligned interests were against the backdrop of the normative and relatively small position of CPA Ireland in comparison to other professional accounting bodies. As revealed in the SPC report, the SPC itself (as a change agent) recommended courses of action to the Council to grow and protect the general interest of members and, as a consequence, improve the body's recognition. A key course of action was the suggestion to introduce mandatory CPE (praxis). Thus, an institutional change occurred within a level 4 institution (Williamson, 2000) i.e. change from within an organization, in this case, CPA

Ireland. This change was not replicated, at least in the context of CPE, by other professional accounting bodies at the time. There are two possibilities for this non-occurrence. First, the feedback from level 4 (over time) towards level 1 did not occur as suggested by Williamson (2000). Second, while no similar research has been undertaken on other Irish or UK professional accounting bodies, if key forces for change were external and emanating from level 1, 2 or 3 institutions, Williamson's (2000) work suggests all professional accounting bodies would have behaved similarly and adopted mandatory CPE.

We also argue that a contradiction arose due to legitimacy concerns which brought about change, including the introduction of mandatory CPE at CPA Ireland. According to Seo and Creed (2002: 226) 'scholars have long predicted that conformity to institutional arrangements may conflict with technical activities and efficiency demands'. This latter notion of efficiency relates to Williamson's (2000) level 4 institutions and resource allocation within CPA Ireland. Citing Scott and Meyer (1991), Seo and Creed (2002) note that conformity to the institutional environment increases survival chances, potentially at the expense of efficiency. As noted above, CPA Ireland appeared to conform to the institutional environment until the SPC report noted a need for growth, recognition and the protection of the general interest of the members. In Seo and Creed (2002) terms, this was a contradiction and a spur for change. In the late 1980s, ICAS and the ICAEW proposed a merger (Bruce, 2005), and as a result, there may have received informal suggestions of similar moves in Ireland between CPA Ireland and ICAI. Nonetheless, our analysis of the Council minutes revealed no evidence of formal talks on such a merger. However, taking this into account, the selection of mandatory CPE helped CPA Ireland to increase its legitimacy and its recognition efforts as a standalone professional body. This also had the potential to increase economic efficiency as a professional body, as improved recognition could drive member growth and thereby achieve efficiencies. It may have been equally efficient from an economic perspective for CPA Ireland to cease to exist at this point in time through a merger, but the action of the change agents was to challenge the existing institutional environment instead. The course of action would seem to be shown as a wise one as membership numbers did indeed grow (for further elaboration of this growth in CPA Ireland, see Sections 2.1 and 2.3) and mandatory CPE requirements as introduced were similar to those mandated by IFAC some fourteen years later.

As stated above, CPA Ireland introduced mandatory CPE more than a decade before most of the other bodies and the introduction of mandatory CPE by CPA Ireland did not spread outwards to other professional accounting bodies in the UK and Ireland. Following the logic of institutional analysis presented by Williamson (2000), change within a level 4 institution can, over time, permeate upward to higher levels of institutional analysis in a feedback-type loop. In institutional terminology, these bodies comprise an organizational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), and in that organizational field they tend to behave in similar ways, through either regulative, normative or mimetic forces. There were no laws requiring mandatory CPE adoption at the time, and normative influences from the profession, in general, were similarly not driving it. However, the increasing public interest debate was a normative force on all professional accounting bodies and some considered/introduced non-mandatory CPE/CPD as outlined earlier. Thus, any feedback emanating to the broader organizational field from CPA Ireland could only be mimetic i.e. the other bodies would follow their lead and over time adopt mandatory CPE. As indicated earlier, this did not happen in general, but it is interesting that the largest body in Ireland, the ICAI, adopted mandatory CPD in 1999 - some years before its UK counterparts. Williamson (2000) does not suggest such feedback must always occur, and he does suggest that a change to level 4 institutions can take a decade or so. In this case, only CPA Ireland appeared - perhaps due to its smaller size - to have an issue which threatened its strategic position and indeed its survival. The other professional accounting bodies, as part of an organizational field comprising larger bodies, could resist or ignore pressure to change, possibly because they did not face the same institutional pressures as CPA Ireland. The exception was seemingly ICAI, who did not adopt mandatory CPE at the same time as CPA Ireland, but did so without regulative influence and before other professional bodies - possibly representing a mimetic course of action within the Irish context. Ultimately, with time, regulative forces (level 2 and 3 institutions) drove mandatory CPE and all professional accounting bodies, through membership of IFAC, enforced their own mandatory CPE/CPD schemes. Meanwhile, CPA Ireland membership did grow (from about 1,000 to 2,000 members, as noted in Section 2.3), and ultimately the professional body also achieved legal recognition alongside all other Irish accounting bodies under the Companies Act of 2003.

Concluding comments

This paper has traced the emergence of mandatory CPE at CPA Ireland, the key principles of which remain in operation today. While there were some changes in 2006, the mandatory CPE/CPD at CPA Ireland was not the a result of the IFAC promulgation in 2004, but the response to a need of incorporating general business and technology changes. CPA Ireland represents a unique case (within the relatively crowded professional accounting space in the UK and Ireland) in terms of the history of implementation of CPE within professional accounting bodies. The primary contribution of this paper is the provision of insights into why a small professional accounting body such as CPA Ireland, introduced mandatory CPE many years before other similar bodies. We argue the provision of mandatory CPE was due to institutional contradictions about misaligned interests and legitimacy issues as a professional body. These contradictions resulted from a desire for growth and recognition within CPA Ireland which could be supported throught the implementation of mandatory CPE. At the same time, the introduction of CPE was aligned with CPA Ireland's overall aim to serve the interest of members, and in turn, the public interest. The paper also offers some theoretical concepts and approaches - Williamson (2000) and Seo and Creed (2002) - which may be useful for future researchers to explore further aspects of the history of professional accounting education. A neo-institutional approach (Rowlinson and Hassard, 2013) has been utilised in other areas of accounting history and found useful. In terms of the history of accounting education, Williamson's (2000) presentation of the levels of institutional analysis may be particularly useful as it can incorporate influences from all societal levels - factors to which education is generally susceptible.

There are some limitations to this study. One limitation is that it is written almost totally from the perspective of CPA Ireland and limited effort was made to investigate the development of CPE from a broader social perspective. However, from a history of accounting education perspective, it provides some useful grounding for future researchers on the emergence of CPE. A second limitation is our use of a relatively narrow institutional framework. While the work of Williamson (2000) and Seo and Creed (2002) assists in framing the analysis, the broader institutional literature provides many more detailed concepts and approaches which could be utilised in future research. Using the institutional approach here, future accounting history research may compare the institutional environment of other professional bodies to that presented here, noting similarities and differences and effects on accounting education within the bodies. In addition, when contemporary records of other professional accounting bodies in the UK, Ireland and elsewhere become available as archival material, it may be possible to study if the actions of CPA Ireland in the early 1990s were discussed or taken in consideration by these bodies. If such discussions occurred, an exploration of the detail of these discussions may offer some useful insights into the type of, or lack of, institutional contradictions in and around education and training. This may provide additional insights with reference to why other professional accounting bodies did not implement mandatory CPE until required by regulations. A study of the introduction of mandatory CPE at ICAI, in 1999, may be particularly interesting, given it also operates in an Irish/UK context and it made that change before it was required and before other similar UK bodies.

Notes

[1] The 1851 census did not refer to 'accountant' as an employment category. In 1861, the Irish Thom's directory listed 43 individuals as 'accountant' and referred to two firms (Farmar, 2013).

[2] The Irish and UK accounting profession emerged ahead of its counterparts in the US and continental countries (Farmar, 2013).

[3] The Society of Accountants in Edinburgh later joined with the The Institute of Accountants and Actuaries in Glasgow and The Society of Accountants in Aberdeen in 1951 to form the The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS, 2012).

[4]The five associations that established ICAEW were the Incorporated Society of Liverpool Accountants, (formed in January 1870); The Institute of Accountants in London (formed in November 1870); the Manchester Institute of Accountants (formed in February 1871); the Society of Accountants in England (1872); the Sheffield Institute of Accountants (1877) (see Zeff, 1971).

[5] The SIAA merged with ICAEW and ICAI in the UK and Ireland respectively in 1957 (Zeff, 1971).

[6]In 2015, CIMA and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) jointly launched a Chartered Global Management Accountant designation which includes over 400,000 members (see CIMA, 2015).

[7] 2015 membership figures: ACCA - 634,000 (ACCA, 2015), ICAEW - 145,000 (ICAEW, 2015), CIMA - 100,000 (see CIMA, 2015).

[8] These ultimately paved the way for international harmonisation and convergence and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) were introduced in the early 2000s.

[9] ICAI was also a founding member of IFAC.

[10] The full legal name is The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland. CPA Ireland is a brand name and is the commonly used term to refer to the Institute.

[11] This is an Irish language term. The English equivalent is Irish Free State.

[12]The transcript of the full debate can be found at http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/seanad1927022400008?opendocument

[13] The current bye-laws can be found at http://www.cpaireland.ie/docs/default-source/regulation/bye-laws.pdf?sfvrsn=2

[14] 'Structured' and 'unstructured' are contemporary concepts and were not used in these early years. The sentiment was however similar to today's one. Structured CPE must be accredited and be part of a formal learning experience, which is measurable and is calculated to contribute directly to the professional competence of a member. Unstructured CPE is learning which is not accredited and is not part of a planned or formal learning experience.

[15] The ICAEW recommended 120 structured hours over a three-year period while ICAS recommended 100 hours over a similar period.

[16] ICAI recommended that members undertake 20 structured hours per year.

[17] CPA Ireland was represented at IFAC since 1977 and became a member of the Fédération des Experts Comptables Européens (FEE) - the representative organization for the accountancy profession in Europe - in December 1994. Under Irish company law, no named professional accounting bodies were recognised until the passing of the Companies (Auditing and Accounting) Act, 2003, at which time CPA Ireland (along with the other professional accounting bodies noted in Table 1) was formally recognised.

[18] This refers to Directive 89/48/EEC, which provides for mutual recognition of qualifications in recognised professions. Members States were required to transpose the Directive to national legislation by 4th January 1991.

[19] ICAI formally approved CPD in 1999, ICAEW and ACCA in 2005, ICAS in 2006.

[20] A merger proposal occurred in 2000 whereby ICAI and CPA Ireland began talks which concluded unsuccessfully after four years. See http://www.charteredaccountants.ie/General/News-and-Events/Media/Archive/2004/January/ICAI-and-CPA-Terminate-Merger-Discussions-/ and Irish Times (2000).

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